



NOTES FROM THE RANGE

April 30, 2014

Funding Education in Kansas By the numbers

\$61 Million to classrooms to benefit students and teachers

\$84 Million in property tax relief for Kansas homeowners

\$8.3 Million in strategic investments in areas of unique excellence in Kansas universities



Understanding HB 2506: the education bill

In the weeks since the legislature passed HB 2506 and since I signed it on April 21, much has been said and reported about the bill and what it does or doesn't do.

Education is one of the core functions of Kansas government, and as Governor, strengthening our schools is one of my primary goals. In line with this high priority, the bill contains good, strong education reforms that benefit Kansas students, teachers, and local districts.

It not only meets, but exceeds the requirements for establishing 'equity' put forth in the State Supreme Court's recent Gannon decision, by putting \$61 million into Kansas classrooms and providing \$84 million in property tax relief annually.

Additionally, this legislation returns control to individual school districts and counties, thus allowing local officials – those who are best positioned to understand the dynamics of their community – to make decisions in the best interest of their students.

Among the reforms included in HB 2506 are measures for alternate certification that will allow experts in STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) finance/accounting and Career and Technical Education to teach in Kansas high schools.

The bill also supports expansion of innovative school districts, provides bonuses to teachers who attain national certification, and allows corporations to provide scholarships that will help low-income families achieve a dream of a better education for their children. The funds for these scholarships create opportunities for existing charitable groups to receive contributions and fund scholarships.

It makes a critical investment in our Regents Universities, providing sustained funding for our institutions of higher education. Our universities fuel our economic engine by creating a highly skilled workforce and nurturing the next generation of Kansas teachers, doctors, business people and others.

These important aspects of the bill have been lost in the discussion. One reform about which much has been said is teacher tenure. Far from abolishing teachers' rights, this legislation merely ends the state-mandated requirement for tenure and returns control over this issue to local individual school districts, where it belongs. Districts remain free to negotiate tenure into their teacher contracts as they see fit, and teachers remain entitled to the same Constitutional and civil rights protections as people in other professions.

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Baxter Springs — The day after a tornado hit Baxter Springs, I visited with residents and first responders and viewed the damage to homes and businesses. Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins and State Senator Jake LaTurner joined me on this visit. There were so many good people helping family, friends and those they didn't even know as they begin to clean up after the storm.



Recognizing Child Abuse Prevention Month — Joining children in planting Pinwheels for Prevention.



Autism Bill — Proud to be joined by the Lt. Governor and families as I signed a bill requiring insurance coverage for autism care.



Saluting Bob Dole — what a great treat to see my long-time friend and personal hero, Bob Dole. Lt. Governor Jeff Colyer and I were pleased to spend some time talking with a truly great American.

New law protects elderly from financial abuse

Kansas senior citizens are now better protected against fraud and financial abuse following the signing of Senate Bill 256 into law on April 17.

The legislature passed, and I signed, the bill which creates the new crime of Mistreatment of an Elder Person.

An elder is defined as anyone age 70 or older. It is unfortunate that we require a law to afford this new protection to our elders, but the bill will enhance law enforcement capability to deal with those who would steal from or defraud the elderly in our state.

Attorney General Derek Schmidt supported the bill, which was first proposed in January by Senators Michael O'Donnell (R-Wichita) and Jeff King (R-Independence).

The law provides the Attorney General's office with "tougher penalties, better investigative tools and clearer boundaries to protect seniors from having their life savings stolen or wrongfully misused," Schmidt said.

Under the law, penalties for stealing from an elder person are substantially enhanced and could result in more than 40 years in prison for large-scale financial abuse.

The law also makes it clear that misusing a trust investment or power of attorney to misappropriate an elder person's life savings is a crime.

Sadly, reports of elder abuse appear to be rising as our population ages. It is estimated that only one in 25 cases is brought to the attention of authorities.

Many victims of these crimes are too confused, frightened or embarrassed to make a report. And in rare instances where the a family is responsible for the abuse, the elderly hesitate to report the crime.

Elders become targets for disreputable telemarketers or scam artists for a number of reasons. Often the elderly are home and alone during the day and expect the people who call or come by their homes to be honest. Unfortunately that is not always true. In some instances it is a family member, volunteer caregiver or other individual known to the victim who takes advantage of them.

Our new Mistreatment of an Elder Person law provides the Attorney General with additional tools that will allow his office to put those who prey on our seniors behind bars.

Understanding the education bill ... continued

Passage and signature of this bill also ensures that there will not be any interruptions to funding or local option budget authority that would have required layoff notices to be sent to teachers and administrators across the state.

This bill, combined with existing education initiatives including the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program and reading initiatives for at-risk students, is a comprehensive investment in Kansas schools and our students.

Though we may not agree on all of these issues, we can agree that educational excellence is vital to the future of our great state, and I look forward to working with all Kansans toward that brighter future.



Fifth Graders — Had a great time with students from Valley Heights school in Blue Rapids, followed by a round of "selfies."